

Social Media and Mental Health

Information every leader should be aware of...

Social media is often scrutinised as having a negative impact on mental health. Young people are now growing up in a technology dominated world and social media plays a major part in their social lives.



This balanced information focusses on both the positive and negative impacts that social media can bring to young people and their mental health



EASY ACCESS TO SUPPORT AND HELP

Young people can access information and advice online instantly whereas the delay in getting help for their mental health locally can be frustrating. Sharing problems or issues with friends, peers and broader social networks can be met with a positive reaction, with 7 in 10 teens stating they have accessed support on social media during tough or challenging times. Where there are moderated communities which offer support and guidance, young people can find a valuable support.

SUSTAINING FRIENDSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS

There is evidence to suggest that strong friendship can be enhanced by social media interaction, allowing young people to create stronger bonds with people they already know. By sharing comments on pictures and posts, it can create long-term friendships as they can continually keep in touch.

A SENSE OF BELONGING

Support can be found in various places online, sometimes this is known as “finding your tribe”. Online platforms and groups can provide a sense of belonging. As a result, it can help build self-esteem and confidence.



LOW SELF-ESTEEM & BODY IMAGE

There are 10 million new photos uploaded to Facebook alone every hour, providing an almost endless potential for young people to be drawn into appearance-based comparisons whilst online. This pressure may contribute to low mood, feelings of inadequacy and low satisfaction with their own lives.

HARMFUL ADVICE

The online world provides the opportunity for anybody to upload and share photoshopped photos, edited videos, fake news and even unvetted advice. It is important to support young people to differentiate between true and useful information and what is fake.

ADDICTION & COMPULSIVE CHECKING

Social media addiction is thought to affect 5% of teenagers. Young people who spend more than 3 hours a day on social media are twice as likely to support poor mental health and has been linked to disturbed sleep patterns and a difficulty to relax due to the “fear of missing out” and not being one of the in-crowd.

CYBER-BULLYING

A UK study recently showed that cyberbullying is one of the biggest challenges for young people and has the greatest effect on wellbeing and mental health than any other type of bullying. 7 out of 10 have been affected and 37% of young people say they are cyberbullied on a regular basis. Young people are twice as likely to be bullied on Facebook than other social media networks.

SOURCES OF HELP

- Childline 0800 1111
- Bullying UK 0808 8002222
- Young Minds Parents Line 0808 802 5544

ALL INFORMATION IS TAKEN FROM THE NATIONAL ONLINE SAFETY WEBSITE #WakeUpWednesday